In the Claims

1. (Currently amended) An apparatus for manipulating and updating data in a backend system ~~using an automated agent~~, said apparatus comprising:

a messaging client for exchanging messages over a network with a messaging server to and from other messaging clients and said backend system; and

~~said automated agent, wherein said~~ an automated agent which is coupled ~~to~~ between said messaging server~~,~~ and

said backend system~~, wherein said backend system is coupled to said automated agent~~ which is capable of accepting requests and issuing responses, and which obtains and uses data input from said messaging clients to determine said manipulating and updating of data.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim ~~3~~1, wherein said automated agent initiates messaging communications to said ~~plurality of~~ other ~~entities~~ messaging clients and mediates a discussion related to said input data.

~~6~~5. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said automated agent appears as a buddy on a buddy list.

6. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim ~~1~~4, wherein said ~~automated agent initiates messaging communications to~~ other messaging clients are associated with prospective meeting attendees and ~~mediates a~~ said discussion relate~~d~~s to ~~said~~ a meeting of said attendees.

7. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said automated agent is capable of responding with any of, but not limited to: information, confirmation, availability, and a request for additional information.

8. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said messaging client exchanges messages via said network with said messaging server by any of, but not limited to:

two-way messaging ~~in real-time and/or non-real-time~~;

email ~~in real-time and/or non-real-time~~;

a paging network ~~in one-way and/or two-way in near-real-time~~; and

instant messaging systems ~~in two-way in real-time~~.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said messaging client<u>s</u> engages in ~~a~~ dialog<u>s</u> with said automated agent.

12. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said automated agent performs any of:

proactively sending<u>,</u> ~~messages~~ to said messaging client, ~~said~~ messages comprising, but not limited to<u>,</u> alert~~ing~~<u>s</u> and reminders;

asking a series of questions to said messaging client to determine intent; and

determining resource availability.

13. (Currently amended) A method for manipulating <u>and updating</u> data in a backend system ~~using an automated agent~~, said method comprising:

providing a messaging client for exchanging messages over a network with a messaging server<u> to and from other messaging clients and said backend system</u>; <u>and</u>

providing ~~said automated agent, wherein said~~ <u>an</u> automated agent <u>which</u> is coupled ~~to~~ <u>between</u> said messaging server~~;~~ and

providing said backend system<u>,</u> ~~wherein said backend system is coupled to said automated agent~~ <u>which is capable of accepting requests and issuing responses, and which obtains and uses data input from said messaging clients to determine said manipulating and updating of data.</u>

5

14. (Canceled)

15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently amended) The method of Claim ~~15~~13, wherein said automated agent initiates messaging communications to said ~~plurality of~~ other ~~entities~~ messaging clients and mediates a discussion related to said input data.

17. (Original) The method of Claim 13, wherein said automated agent appears as a buddy on a buddy list.

18. (Currently amended) The method of Claim ~~13~~16, wherein said ~~automated agent initiates messaging communications to~~ other messaging clients are associated with prospective meeting attendees and ~~mediates a~~ said discussion related~~s~~ to ~~said~~ a meeting of said attendees.

19. (Original) The method of Claim 13, wherein said automated agent is capable of responding with any of, but not limited to: information, confirmation, availability, and a request for additional information.

20. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 13, wherein said messaging client exchanges messages via said network with said messaging server by any of, but not limited to:
    two-way messaging ~~in real-time and/or non-real-time~~;
    email ~~in real-time and/or non-real-time~~;
    a paging network ~~in one-way and/or two-way in near-real-time~~; and
    instant messaging systems ~~in two-way in real-time~~.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Canceled)

23. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 13, wherein said messaging client~~s~~ engages in ~~a~~ dialog~~s~~ with said automated agent.

6

24. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 13, said automated agent performing any of:

proactively sending, ~~messages~~ to said messaging client, ~~said~~ messages comprising, but not limited to, alert~~ing~~s and reminders;

asking a series of questions to said messaging client to determine intent; and

determining resource availability.

25. (New) A robot agent for receiving Instant Messages from a first user-client and responsively interacting between the first user-client, a calendar server system, and other user-clients to enable each of the user-clients to enter queries and updating data into, and to receive queries and data from, the calendar server system.